

## **Council 4 AFSCME Testimony on the State Budget**

**Appropriations Committee**

**February 22, 2013**

Good evening Chairman Harp, Chairman Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 public and private employees.

Our union urges you to please make sure that the Departments of Social Services and Children and Families are properly staffed. (DSS loses 41 positions in FY14 and another 7 in '15; DCF loses 30 positions in FY 14) The budget shows large personal services cuts. Neither of these agencies has an abundance of staff. In fact, an examination shows quite the opposite.

The Department of Social Services is probably the most understaffed agency in state government. Our union has testified many times before about the impossibility of DSS workers being asked to handle as many as 1,000 applications or requests for assistance per worker, when a more appropriate number might be under 400. There has been improvement, but not enough. These position cuts may make it worse.

We urge you to not privatize the duties of the Soldier, Sailors and Marines Fund to the American Legion. This taxpayer funded institution, with a proud 150-year history, needs to stay under taxpayer control. It is good to let the beneficiaries of this fund know where the funding has come from – Connecticut's taxpayers. Having to apply to a private membership organization may be confusing for qualified people seeking aid

The respected UConn Economic Quarterly report shows that CT is not a big spending state. Those of you who are versed in the budget know this.

The state made great strides in helping working poor families with the EITC. The proposed budget cuts part of the progress. Simply put, this makes life harder for low wage workers. The ranks of low wage workers have grown. The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that 50% of Americans are working poor or outright poor. The minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation making the EITC important.

The average working family has lost 40% of its annual income since 2007 according to the U.S. Federal Reserve. Yet the GNP has remained fairly intact.

The distribution of wealth should concern every lawmaker in this building. Almost all of America's economic gain during the last thirty years has wound up in the hands of a few wealthy families. Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman has said "We have a society in which money is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people, and in which the concentration of income and wealth threatens to make us a democracy in name only."

Council 4 urges you to restore aid to working families, the poor, the afflicted as one who is considered one of our greatest moral teachers has said "the least of our brothers."

Austerity has not improved the economy in Spain, the United Kingdom, Greece or other countries where it has been tried. Of course, all of these countries have had a much stronger and more expensive social safety net than the United States. Too cut the small amount of help that we extend to the poor is the wrong thing to do.

As billionaire Republican and patriot Warren Buffett has said that "There's class warfare, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning."

Council 4 urges you to restore taxes on the richest of our citizens and go back to a tax system similar to that which made our country prosper through the fifties, sixties and seventies. The tax plan submitted to the General Assembly by the Better Coalition would raise revenue in a way that would encourage job growth, reward work, respect our state's long tradition of helping the "least of our brothers" and mirror the values that most Connecticut residents espouse to believe in.